

Pam
Jews



What Presbyterians Should Know About Work For The Jews



How many Jews now live in the United States?

The estimate for 1935 is 4,500,000. This is 1,500,000 more than in Poland and nine times more than in Germany. There are more Jews in America than in all Asia, Africa, South America, Australasia, and most of the countries of Western Europe combined. Jews have lived in America since 1654, but the vast majority have come since 1880, urged by the lure of American liberty.

When did the work of the Board for the Jews begin?

In 1908 the General Assembly directed the Board of Home Missions through its newly created Department of Immigration to inaugurate a national work for the evangelization of the Jews. In 1917 the General Assembly instructed the Board to select an advisory committee to assist in the development of the program and in raising funds for its support. Throughout the subsequent years Jewish evangelism has been an integral part of the Board's work.

Where do Jews live in America?

They are scattered over every state of the Union, in 9,712 different places. Two-thirds of the total number live in the Eastern states, about one million in the Western and Pacific states, and one-half million in the Southern states. The Jews are a city folk. Though so widely scattered, 3,000,000 live in eleven cities, of which New York has 2,000,000, Chicago, 325,000 and Philadelphia 270,000.

Is there diversity among Jews in this country?

Yes, great diversity. They have come from many lands, and manifest the characteristics of the people of these lands. The first immigrants came from Spanish-speaking countries, then from Germany, but by far the greatest number have come from Russia and Poland. There are also Levantine Jews from Syria, Beni-Israelites from India, black Jews from Ethiopia, and many other unusual groups.

Have Jews had a share in the making of America?

An important share. They espoused the revolutionary cause. Two Jews were on Washington's staff, and Haym Salomon financed the Valley Forge campaign. They have been fully represented in every national cause since. Today the clothing, fur, tobacco, jewelry, and moving picture industries are largely in their hands. They are also prominent in the professions and in public affairs.



Do Jews need to be evangelized?

As a people without Christ, Jews are in the same spiritual need as other unevangelized people of our own or other races. This is emphasized by the teaching and example of Christ and his apostles. Through the disappearance of the ghetto and the influence of modern thought and industrial conditions, many Jews have abandoned their ancient faith and are religiously adrift. They need the gospel.

What difficulties have been encountered in the work?

The traditional attitude of Jews toward Christianity has been one of opposition. This has been accentuated by the religious coercion and persecution to which they have been subjected through the centuries. Such estrangement requires time and patience to remove. We have also to reckon with indifference, misunderstanding, and prejudice within the Church which are serious barriers to a Christian approach to the Jews.



What are the essential factors in a Christian approach to the Jews?

Personal interest, understanding, and sympathy. Wise friendly contacts with Jews by Christians have proved the most effective means of interpreting Christ to them and of winning them to his discipleship. If every Jew in America had a Christian friend, age-long barriers would gradually disappear and the solution of the Jewish problem would be in sight. It is essentially a Christian problem.

What are the objectives of the Board in its work for the Jews?

To educate the Church concerning the Jewish situation in America, and the need and opportunity of a ministry in their behalf, to seek the removal of prejudice between Jews and Christians and the creation of good will, to enlist the various agencies of the Church in a program of service, to cooperate in the training of leaders, and to devise fresh and effective methods of approach.

Through what agencies does the Board carry forward its program?

Through the neighborhood house which provides friendly Christian contacts with the Jews as members of a community. Through the local church which has Jews, few or many, in its parish and seeks to include them in its ministry. Through the college that has Jewish students and undertakes to open the way for spiritual guidance. Through summer camps and other agencies that afford opportunity for Christian contacts.

Has the neighborhood approach to Jews been justified?

The varied kindly ministries of the neighborhood house have proved an effective means of breaking down barriers of prejudice and of opening a way for the interpretation of Christ and the Christian faith. In Brooklyn, Baltimore, Chicago, Omaha, San Francisco, and Los Angeles, it has been demonstrated that friendly contacts may prove a fruitful channel for conveying lasting spiritual impressions.

Can a local church reach Jews who live in its parish?

Many a church has discovered that Jews are as responsive to a friendly, intelligent Christian approach as other unchurched elements in its community. There are hundreds of churches with Jews in their membership. Some have thirty or more. If each of the 3,317 Presbyterian churches located in places where there are Jews shared in this service, the aggregate would far exceed anything hitherto attempted. Philadelphia has a promising church program.



"Go, Tell This People"

What can a Christian college do?

Treat its Jewish students in a Christian way, rebuke racial prejudice in every form and encourage friendly relations, bring together groups of Jews and Christians for a frank discussion of common religious problems, and afford opportunities for personal conference concerning religious difficulties. One college president reports twelve students won to the discipleship of Christ through one sympathetic professor.

What has the Board been doing to train leaders in this field?

Churches are encouraged and helped to establish study groups in which such books as Basil Matthews' "The Jew and the World Ferment" are used. Addresses and lectures are delivered in the theological seminaries of the Church and in training schools to enlist and prepare future ministers and church workers for service. Through conferences, literature, and correspondence assistance is given in meeting actual problems.

Have the results of the Board's work been worth while?

Converts in the Jewish field compare favorably in number and character with those in any other field of the Church. Peniel, Chicago, reports two hundred fifty converts from a community of socialist Jews in fifteen years resulting in the formation of a church. It is estimated that there are three thousand members of the Presbyterian Church of Jewish parentage, of whom seventy are ministers and missionaries, and many church officers.

Do present conditions emphasize the need of Jewish work?

Phenomenal changes are taking place in Jewish life and thought. Judaism no longer holds the Jewish masses. Jews have come under the influence of modern thought, modern movements, and modern cults. Jews today are open-minded as they have not been for centuries. They are willing to consider the claims of Christ and Christianity. As one has said: "This is the day for which our fathers prayed."

What can I do to help forward the work?

Study about the Jews and seek to interest your church and individuals in the program of the Board. Endeavor to form a mission study group and a reading circle. Seek to remove prejudice against the Jews and endeavor to cultivate better attitudes. Pray for the work of the Board and its workers. Become a friend of some Jew or Jewish family. Contribute toward the Jewish work of the Board.

Where can I secure further information?

Write to the Board of National Missions indicating the information you desire. The Board publishes literature on the subject, some of which is free and some at a small price. Send twenty-five cents for sample copies. The Board will gladly correspond with churches and individuals seeking to reach their Jewish neighbors or to develop interest in the work. Our experience is always at your service.

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